

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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SUBJECT: NEPAL REACTION TO SIKKIM'S "ASSOCIATION" WITH INDIA

REF: KATHMANDU'S 3435 AND PREVIOUS

1. IN CONTRAST TO HMG'S RELUCTANCE TO COMMENT ON PAST INDIAN MOVES VIS-A-VIS SIKKIM, NEWS THAT SIKKIM TO BE PROVIDED PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION THROUGH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT HAS BROUGHT SWIFT REACTION IN KATHMANDU. FONMIN KARKI RESPONDED TO QUESTIONS SEPTEMBER 2 IN NATIONAL PANCHAYAT AND SAID THAT "AS A CLOSE NEIGHBOR, NEPAL WISHES THAT SIKKIM SHOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE PROGRESS THROUGH THE PRESERVATION OF ITS TRADITIONAL ENTITY." KARKI SAID THAT WHILE IT WAS DIFFICULT TO PREDICT THE FORM OF RELATIONSHIP THAT WOULD EVENTUALLY DEVELOP BETWEEN INDIA AND SIKKIM, NEPAL REAFFIRMED ITS OPPOSITION TO INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF ANY STATE WHICH HE CALLED A "FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTION OF OUR FOREIGN POLICY."

2. PANCHAYAT SESSION WAS CLOSED BUT WE UNDERSTAND MEMBERS WERE VOCIFEROUS AND PRESS HAS PUBLISHED STATEMENTS BY THEM STRONGLY CONDEMNING LATEST INDIAN ACTION. ONE MEMBER, FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXAMPLE, IS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT "RECENT SORROWFUL EVENTS

MAY RECUR IN BHUTAN" AND SHOULD GIVE GRAVE CONCERN TO NEPAL, AS WELL. OTHERS ARE REPORTED AS SUGGESTING THAT HMG SHOULD TAKE LEAD IN MOBILIZING INTERNATIONAL OPINION IN INTERNATIONAL BODIES SUCH AS UN.

3. IN MEETING SEPTEMBER 3 WITH AMBASSADOR ON OTHER ISSUES, FOREIGN SECRETARY KHATRI CONFIRMED THAT PANCHAYAT SESSION HAD BEEN LIVELY INDEED, WITH MANY MEMBERS CRITICIZING INDIAN STANCE. KHATRI, TOO, SHOWED HIS CONCERN BY SAYING THAT QUESTION IN HIS MIND ABOUT INDIAN MOVE IS "WAS IT NECESSARY?" IN TRYING TO FATHOM INDIAN MOTIVES FOR MOVING AT THIS TIME KHATRI SAID THAT ONE RUMOR CURRENT IN KATHMANDU WAS REPORT FROM SIKKIM THAT A LETTER HAD BEEN WRITTEN TO UN SECGEN ASKING THAT SIKKIMESE QUESTION BE RAISED WITHIN UN. KHATRI, WITHOUT INDICATING WHETHER HE PUT MUCH STOCK IN RUMOR, IMPLIED THAT INDIAN DECISION MAY HAVE BEEN TAKEN IN ORDER TO FORESTALL SUCH A MOVE IN INTERNATIONAL BODIES, PRESUMABLY BY SEEKING TO ESTABLISH THAT SIKKIM QUESTION IS MATTER ESSENTIALLY WITHIN THE DOMESTIC JURISDICTION OF INDIA.

3. NEPALESE PRESS HAS BEEN NEARLY UNANIMOUS IN CONDEMNING INDIAN ACTION WHICH, IN WORDS OF ONE PAPER, "BRINGS SHOCK AND DISTRESS TO NEPAL." ANOTHER PAPER SEPTEMBER 3 NOTED THAT STUDENTS MIGHT LIKE TO TAKE ACTION THROUGH DEMONSTRATION IN FRONT OF INDIAN EMBASSY. THAT BROAD HINT WAS QUICKLY PICKED UP BY STUDENTS AT TRI-CHANDRA CAMPUS WHO ATTEMPTED TO BLOCK TRAFFIC FOR ONE HOUR SEPTEMBER 3 IN KATHMANDU BEFORE BEING DRIVEN OFF BY POLICE. DEMONSTRATIONS ARE ALMOST UNPRECEDENTED AND ARE GOOD INDICATION THAT ON THIS ISSUE, GOVERNMENT LINE WILL BE SUPPORTED BY STRONG NATIONAL FEELINGS, IN THIS CASE WITH ANTI-INDIAN ASPECT.

4. NEWSPAPERS SEPTEMBER 4 REPORT THAT NEARLY 5000 STUDENTS FROM VARIOUS COLLEGE CAMPUSES AROUND KATHMANDU GATHERED LAST NIGHT TO MARCH TO INDIAN EMBASSY TO DELIVER PROTEST NOTE ON SIKKIM. REPORTS SAID THAT PEACEFUL MARCH "CONDEMNED INDIAN INTERFERENCE IN SIKKIMESE AFFAIRS."

5. EMBOFF WHO WITNESSED DEMONSTRATION AS IT MARCHED THROUGH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CITY REPORTS THAT NO MORE THAN 500 STUDENTS TOOK PART. GROUP SHOUTED SLOGANS, INCLUDING "NEPALESE ARE ONE," "INDIRA GHANDI STAY HOME," AND "INDIA OUT OF SIKKIM." FOLLOWING ABORTIVE ATTEMPT TO BURN DOWN MOVIE THEATER OWNED BY INDIANS, GROUP MARCHED TO GATES OF INDIAN COMPOUND WHERE THEY WERE STOPPED BY TROOPS. POLICE HELD DEMONSTRATORS IN CHECK AND ASIDE FROM OCCASIONAL ROCK THROWING, MARCH BY AND LARGE WAS PEACEFUL. PROTEST NOTE PRESENTED AND RECEIVED BY INDIAN OFFICIAL. ALTHOUGH MANY OF

THOSE WHO TOOK PART IN DEMONSTRATION APPEARED TO DO SO AS A LARK, IT WAS WELL ORGANIZED AND THERE WERE A NUMBER WHO APPEARED GENUINELY ANGRY AND WILLING TO RESORT TO VIOLENCE.

6. COMMENT: SIKKIM QUESTION IS VIEWED BY GON AND NEPALESE CITIZENRY WITH INCREASING CONCERN. ANALOGY BETWEEN SIKKIM AND NEPAL, HOWEVER INACCURATE OR IRRATIONAL, IS EASILY DRAWN. MORE WORRISOME, ESPECIALLY TO SOPHISTICATED NEPALESE, IS THEIR INABILITY TO UNDERSTAND MOTIVATION AND TIMING OF INDIAN DECISION SINCE, IN THEIR VIEW, ALL INDIAN OBJECTIVES -- SOME OF WHICH THEY COULD UNDERSTAND, IF NOT SYMPATHIZE WITH -- HAD PRESUMABLY BEEN GAINED. PANCHAYAT WILL CONTINUE DISCUSSION OF SIKKIM WHICH HAS INCREASING POTENTIAL TO BECOME CONTENTIOUS ISSUE IN INDIAN-NEPALESE BILATERAL RELATIONS.

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